



State of New Jersey STATE PAROLE BOARD

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Media Release

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State Parole Board Wins Approval For 14 AmeriCorp Workers

Volunteers To Help Parole Board Reintegrate Parolees Back Into Communities

Trenton, NJ— State Parole Board Chairman John D'Amico, Jr. announced today that the State Parole Board will receive the aid of fourteen AmeriCorps*VISTA funded volunteer workers to assist parolees successfully and safely reintegrate themselves back into society.

"Approval of this program for the State Parole Board will move the state forward in its efforts to remove obstacles to parolees' being able to rebuild their lives, especially in the areas of housing and employment, and will do so at absolutely no cost to the New Jersey taxpayer. This is a 'win-win' situation for everyone concerned," D'Amico stated. According to D'Amico, the Parole Board received a letter from the New Jersey Office of the Corporation for National and Community Service notifying the Board of the approval of its application for workers. The Corporation for National and Community Service oversees administration of the AmeriCorps*VISTA program nationwide.

The AmeriCorps*VISTA (Volunteers In Service To America) program was created in 1973 as a companion to the successful Peace Corp program and expanded in 1993. The program encourages and enables skilled volunteers to make a long-term commitment to improving communities within America. AmeriCorp*VISTA's policy is to provide "service to strengthen and supplement efforts to eliminate poverty and poverty-related human, social and environmental problems."

According to Chairman D'Amico, many parolees come out of prison with very limited resources and are often living close to, or below, the poverty level. Speaking of these parolees, D'Amico pointed out that, "not only will the VISTA program help us help them improve their prospects for decent housing and employment, but it will also improve the standard of living for their families and others who depend on them. Such improvements go very far in keeping them from re-offending and returning to prison."

The AmeriCorp volunteers will work with the Board's Community Partnership Unit headed by Maurice "Bud" Scully. According to Mr. Scully, his office "has already begun the process of interviewing and screening applicants for the volunteer positions."

The Board will select the fourteen (14) adult volunteers to be hired. Candidates will

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be selected based qualifications including experience in helping people access available resources in their communities. The volunteers selected will be paired with parolees coming out of prison and will show the parolees how to go about getting assistance in obtaining decent and affordable housing and in obtaining productive employment.

The volunteers selected must commit to an initial service period of at least 12 months with the potential to renew the service period for up to two additional years. Volunteers are paid a living expense "stipend" by VISTA of \$920 a month and health benefits. At the conclusion of their service period, volunteers receive a one-year "preference" with respect to seeking federal employment as well as a "completion stipend" of \$100 for each month of service. In lieu of the "completion stipend," volunteers may elect a \$4,725 one-time educational credit towards paying off educational loans or to be applied to tuition at a qualified educational institution.

Parole Board Chairman D'Amico stated that he is "very excited" about the program. According to D'Amico, the VISTA program will be bringing a wealth of resources to the Parole Board at absolutely no expense to New Jersey's taxpayer and without putting additional demands on an already strained state budget. D'Amico stated: "Anytime something like this can be accomplished, it can only improve the quality of life for all New Jerseyans: those seeking to rebuild their lives and those who depend on state government to help parolees safely reenter their communities and become productive citizens once again"

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